

AN ASSESSMENT OF HEALTH SERVICE NEEDS FOR THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN NORTH CAROLINA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This assessment provides a preliminary description of some of the health care needs and the barriers to health services for African Americans in North Carolina. Recommendations are given for improving access to health services for African Americans. In addition, this project included the development of components for a self-help initiative to be implemented through the North Carolina National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

The survey instruments assessed: 1) methods employed in reaching African Americans; 2) health service areas of perceived need for African Americans; and 3) strategies for addressing the health needs of African Americans. All interviews were done by telephone. Those surveyed were NAACP members, who represented the African-American community, and health educators in local health departments, who represented the providers. A stratified random sample of 30 counties was drawn from North Carolina counties having 800 or more African-American residents. There were five strata, which were based on census data for percentages of African-American residents.

Frequencies and percentages of responses were computed for individual variables. Comparisons were made between the responses of the NAACP members and the health department representatives on strategies to serve African Americans. Thirty local health departments and 24 NAACP branches were included in the assessment. There was limited availability of culturally appropriate services, and there was much perceived need for help with this issue. Most of the health departments and most of the NAACP representatives felt more help was needed with transportation for the African-American community. Regarding evening and weekend hours, half of the health departments expressed a need for help in this area to better serve African Americans, while two-thirds of the NAACP representatives did. The location of the health department's services was another area in need of improvement as identified by the majority of respondents. In addition, there were few partnerships focused on serving African Americans, and much perceived need for help in this area.

Recommendations include the development of more:

- ◆ health department outreach into non-traditional settings;
- ◆ evening and weekend hours to improve access for this population; and
- ◆ partnerships between local health departments and community organizations for mutual support and the development of culturally appropriate services.

A more extensive assessment would help obtain a better picture of the health service needs of the African American community. This could include a greater variety of agencies to obtain a larger and perhaps more representative sample of community members. Focus groups could also be used to explore barriers and recommendations for change. However, this preliminary assessment and the information available in the literature can provide the basis for some initial planning to address the health status disparities of African Americans in North Carolina.

N.C. DOCUMENTS
CLEARINGHOUSE

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